

## REMARKS

Applicant appreciates the time taken by the Examiner to review Applicant's present application. This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Official Action mailed September 13, 2004. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and favorable action in this case.

### Claim Objections

Applicant appreciates the Examiner stating that while claims 6, 7 and 12 stand currently objected to as being depended upon a rejected base claim, these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant has amended the claims as outlined below to incorporate the base claim and limitations of intervening claims to place the currently pending claims in condition for allowance based upon the Examiner's indication of the allowable subject matter of claims 6, 7 and 12. In addition Claim 1 and claims 17-24 have been canceled without prejudice.

### Claim 2

The Examiner indicated claim 6 was allowable. As originally filed, Claim 6 depended from claim 4, which in turn depended from independent claim 2. To place independent claim 2 in condition for allowance, Applicant has incorporated the limitations of allowable claim 6 and intervening dependent claim 4 into amended claim 2 (i.e., claim 2 now incorporates the limitations of claim 6 and all intervening claims). This makes claim 2 allowable (for the same reasons claim 6 was allowable). Claims 3, 5, 7 and 13 depend from amended independent claim 2 and are allowable as further limitations on this allowable base claim.

### Claim 8

The Examiner indicated claim 12 was allowable. As originally filed, Claim 12 depended from claim 10, which depended from claim 9, which depended from claim 8, which depended from claim 2. To place dependent claim 8 in condition for allowance, Applicant has amended claim 8 to include the limitations of base claim 2, the limitations of allowable claim 12 and limitations from intervening claims 9 and 10. This makes claim 8 an independent claim that is allowable (for the reasons claim 12 was allowable). Claims 9-11 depend from amended independent claim 8 and are allowable as further limitations on allowable claim 8.

Claims 14 and 15

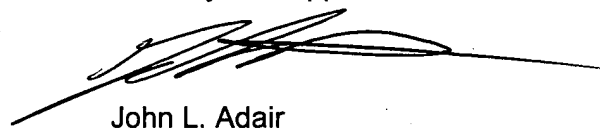
Independent Claims 14 and 15 were rejected under U.S.C. § 102 as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,574,667 ("Blumenau"). Applicant has amended claims 14 and 15 to incorporate limitations similar to those found in allowable claims 6 and 12. Therefore, claims 14 and 15 (as amended) are now in condition for allowance. Claim 16 depends from amended independent claim 15 and is allowable as a further limitation on allowable claim 15.

Applicant has now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance as outlined by the Examiner. Other than as explicitly set forth above, this reply does not include an agreement on the part of Applicant to statements, assertions, assumptions, conclusions, or any combination thereof in the Office Action. For the foregoing reasons and for other reasons clearly apparent, Applicant respectfully requests full allowance of Claims 2, 3, 5, 7-11 and 13-16. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number listed below for prompt action in the event any issues remain.

Attached is a Petition for Extension of Time and a check to cover the one month extension fee. While Applicant believes no further fees are due based on this response to office action, the Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 50-3183 of Sprinkle IP Law Group.

Respectfully submitted,

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